



## **Louisville Metro Tree Advisory Commission**

**Tuesday, November 26, 2013 at 5:00 p.m.**

**APCD Boardroom**

**Meeting Minutes**

### **I. Welcome and Announcements –Henry Heuser, Jr., Co-Chair**

The following Louisville Metro Tree Advisory Commission (hereinafter, “Commission” or “LMTAC”) members were present: Henry Heuser (Co-Chair), Katy Schneider (Co-Chair), Allen Steinbock (Secretary-Treasurer), Paul Cappiello, Todd Eberle, Robert Eberenz, Jr., Maria Koetter, and Kenya Wade, as well as Ex-Officio Commissioners Mesude Duyar, Sherie’ Long, Michelle King, and Mark White.

Co-Chair Henry Heuser brought the meeting to order at 5:06pm and asked for Co-Chair Katy Schneider to introduce the new members and for a general round of introductions.

### **II. Introduction of New Member – Katy Schneider, Co-Chair**

Katy asked new Commissioner Aaron Boggs to introduce himself. Aaron is the Assistant Director for Maintenance at the University of Louisville, overseeing all campus buildings and grounds. He said he’s happy to serve. Henry commended him on the work he’s done at the UofL campus.

Henry asked the other Commissioners to introduce themselves, which they did. Katy then asked Commissioner-to-Be Betsy Ruhe to introduce herself.

Henry asked Secretary/Treasurer Allen Steinbock to give the Commission a financial update. Allen said there were \$325 dollars in the Louisville Tree Fund as of the October 31, 2013 finance report and that the Tree Fund had received another \$1,100 in November. Henry said Brightside would be the “official thanker” for any charitable donations. Katy explained that the Tree Fund was completely separate from Brightside, but that it was housed in Brightside for convenience purposes “for the time being.”

An audience member asked how the public could donate, whether checks should be made out to Brightside. Katy said they should make checks out to “the Louisville Tree Fund.”

### **III. Approval of Minutes – Katy Schneider**

Katy asked for and received unanimous approval of the minutes from last meeting.

### **IV. Old Business**

**a. Update from Office of Sustainability – Maria Koetter, Director of Sustainability**

Louisville Metro Sustainability Director and Commissioner Maria Koetter gave an update of the Tree Canopy Assessment RFP (Assessment). She enumerated some of the goals of the Assessment. One would be to look at where the trees are (or aren't) and where trees could be planted to get the canopy up to 45 percent. Another goal would be to plant trees in such a way that would help alleviate the urban heat island effect. Maria said the Assessment was very granular and future thinking. She also mentioned that the Assessment tied MSD in as a key partner.

Maria also talked about the urban heat island grant project. The money came from donations from The Augusta Brown Holland Philanthropic Foundation, The Owsley Brown Charitable Foundation, and a grant (made possible by the availability of the previous donations as a match) from the Local Sustainability Matching Fund and totaled \$140,000. She explained that the work would be done by Georgia Tech professor Brian Stone, a national urban heat expert. She said she was hoping for a granular assessment, even at the block-by-block level. Henry asked when Brian Stone would be here. Maria said she didn't have his site visit dates yet.

Finally, she said she'll be hosting a Sustainability Summit January 17-18, 2014.

**b. Update from Brightside – Gina O'Brien, Executive Director**

Brightside Executive Director Gina O'Brien said she and Allen had a meeting regarding the Brightside Foundation. She said they were working on a way for private donations to both the Tree Fund and Brightside Foundation to be donated through PayPal.

She also introduced Erin Thompson, the city's new urban forestry coordinator. Gina said it had been a busy three weeks for Erin, trying to establish a baseline of the city's tree canopy. Gina said Tree Tracker was now up and running to track all planting within a community. She said they were up to 4,000 trees. Henry asked how groups such as those that Projects & Maintenance Committee Co-Chair Mike Hayman was working with would know about Tree Tracker. Mike said they were talking about it. Gina said they were in discussion with Chris Poynter at the Mayor's Office to determine the timing of a public announcement.

**c. Update on downtown tree planting – Ken Herndon, Director of Operations and Communications, Louisville Downtown Management District**

Ken Herndon, Director of Operations and Communications for the Louisville Downtown Management District, said that the Glenview Garden Club trees he spoke of at the last Commission meeting will start going in the ground soon, with a big press event including the mayor, to be held on December 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am.

He said they will also be expanding five tree wells at 5<sup>th</sup> and Liberty Streets, where there are currently five dying ash trees, as a way to experiment with the use of contiguous tree wells in the downtown area. Ex-Officio Commissioner and Louisville Metro Planning & Design Services Landscape Architect Sherie' Long asked Ken if he knew that MSD was doing a stormwater reduction project in that parking lot. Ken said he did not. Sherie' said they could meet next week to talk about it. Ken said the well expansions were not cheap—about \$800 each. Henry asked for some explanation of what was at 5<sup>th</sup> and Liberty. Sherie' said it was a surface parking lot. Commissioner and Projects & Maintenance Committee Co-Chair Paul Cappiello asked if the project was just removing the concrete. Ken said they would remove the concrete and see what was down there. Paul asked Ex-Officio Commissioner and Louisville Metro City Arborist Mark White what kind of topsoil was being used. Mark said it was a blend mixed on-site by Action Landscaping.

Ken said there was another site on 4<sup>th</sup> Street where there were four tree wells. They are going to remove the grates, expand the wells, and install a porous pave material. He said the landowner would pay for the material costs.

Henry asked if Ken's committee could study whether fire hydrants could be a source for street space for tree planting. Ken said yes.

Ken then showed a "Gatorbag" with tags recognizing the Glenview Garden Club for their \$24,000 donation for downtown tree watering.

**d. Report back from the Partners in Community Forestry National Conference – Henry Heuser, Jr., Katy Schneider, Mesude Duyar, and Mike Hayman**

Henry said several organizations came together—American Forests, the Arbor Day Foundation, Davey Tree, the USDA Forest Service, the Society of Municipal Arborists, the Alliance for Community Trees, and Tree Campus USA—to hold the conference. He said one takeaway is that an urban forest master plan is basic and vital. So far, Louisville doesn't have one, but other cities do. Another takeaway was that utilities were an important part of the process. Henry said that LG&E hadn't gotten on board so far, but that they needed to.

Henry said that trees were facing disease problems all over the country. Oak wilt was one he hadn't heard of before, but was causing problems in other parts of the country. Examples of its impact in Pittsburgh, the site of the conference, were seen.

He also said "Silva Cells" were discussed at the conference.

Finally, he said another takeaway was that successful cities have coordinated tree programs, shade tree ordinances, sidewalk ordinances, and landscaping ordinances for parking lots. Henry said Louisville doesn't have these, but other cities do to great effect. Henry pointed to New York's Million Tree Program as one that's been operating for a long time with great success.

Katy said they were trying to make sustainability people tree people. The other message she heard was that trees are a social justice issue. Henry explained that the detrimental effects of a weak tree canopy impact the underprivileged more than the wealthy. Mike Hayman added there was a direct correlation with mortality, income, and trees—affecting the poor most of all. Katy said there were several studies to support that idea.

Ex-Officio Commissioner and Metro Parks Forestry and Landscape Manager Mesude Duyar said she was impressed at how many organizations were working together in Pittsburgh. She said Louisville was missing that kind of collaboration. In Pittsburgh, she said, it wasn't just the government or the Tree Commission, but other organizations. She also said the EAB problem hadn't hit Louisville yet as much as it will, so it is something the Commission should be talking about for the near future.

**e. Discussion on KYTC standards for roadside trees – Steve Kempf, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet District 5**

Henry introduced Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) District 5 Roadside Environmental District Administrator Steve Kempf and asked him to discuss state highway tree regulations. Steve explained that KYTC has a maintenance agreement with Louisville Metro Government (LMG), reimbursing them for landscape maintenance on state roads within the Louisville Metro jurisdiction. He added that KYTC also uses outside contractors in some cases. He explained that KYTC's District 5 included Jefferson County and seven other counties and that KYTC issued regulations on planting trees in the right-of-way along state roads.

Mike asked if the regulations were different for different roads. Steve explained that KYTC set the regulations for state roads. Mike asked how close to a state road the Commission could plant an oak tree. Steve said 15 feet. Mike asked whether they could plant trees in the Hurstbourne Parkway medians. Steve said “potentially.” He explained that Brightside Landscape Manager Cindy Marquel had submitted a permit to plant trees in the median on Hurstbourne Parkway. Steve said that proposal wasn’t specific enough for approval at the time, but that KYTC wasn’t opposed to the idea.

Sherie’ told Steve that developers she works with through Metro Planning and Design Services often have difficulty getting their phone calls returned when calling about state highway tree planting permits. Steve said they could start with him and he would send them to the permitting section and make sure that section got the requests. Sherie’ said they needed someone to follow up on inquiries. Steve explained that the permitters didn’t know anything about trees specifically, rather they are there to look at whether the permit application meets the regulations and that he then looks at the permits for final approval.

Todd Eberle asked whether there was a policy for whether trees have priority over moving utilities for street widenings. Steve said there was no policy against trees but that it would be more of a design consideration. He said that KYTC is always concerned with liability. Steve said, for example, there were dying ash trees everywhere. He also pointed to trees cleared out on Cannons Lane. Steve said he had asked for those trees and others to be cleaned out because they were invasive trees of heaven and a walnut tree, which presented the hazard of walnuts rolling into the street. He said liability was the bottom line. Todd said on the road he’s thinking of—a portion of U.S. Highway 42 east of the Gene Snyder expressway—one side has no trees and the other side does and asked whether there was a policy for tree removal. Steve said it was a design issue but he didn’t know anything about that site specifically.

Paul asked whether the regulations were open to discussion at some point. Paul said it would be helpful to understand the reasoning behind some of the regulations. He pointed to one regulation that stipulated no planting of shrubs with trunks 3” in diameter within in 15’-30’ of the highway. Steve said they were Kentucky regulations. Paul asked if a particular person could explain the reasoning. Steve said it could be the District Engineer or Chief of Design. Katy said that the Commission needed to work with KYTC because they were both stakeholders.

Ex-Officio Commissioner and Air Pollution Control District Environmental Supervisor Michelle King asked where people could find out whether a road is a state highway. Steve said if there is a number in front of it, it’s a state highway. The information, he said, is available on the KYTC website.

Henry said he had also contacted Steve about invasive, tree-killing vines along the interstates. He noted an example in Seneca Park. Steve said last summer a contract crew cut the bush honeysuckle near the rock cuts by Cannons Lane. Henry thought the Olmsted Parks Conservancy (OPC) had done that. Someone in the audience explained that there was a KYTC grant that the OPC and Brightside had been working on. Gina explained that there had been some Metro Council questions with the plan, but Brightside ended up using Gallopalooza money to match the grant. They then came up with a shared maintenance plan between KYTC, Brightside, and the OPC. Henry asked if the remaining area would be cleaned up soon. Gina said yes. Steve said it cost \$20,000 for the private contractor to clean up what they did.

Henry thanked Steve for coming.

## **V. New business**

**a. Louisville's Downtown Tree Mapping Initiative: Progress Report – Patrick Piuma, Director, Urban Design Studio**

Henry invited Patrick Piuma, director of the University of Louisville's Urban Design Studio, to present on the progress of the Downtown Tree Mapping Initiative. Patrick suggested that since meeting time was running short, Louisville Grows' Valerie Magnuson could speak first and he would give his presentation at the next meeting. Henry accepted.

**b. Love Louisville Trees – Valerie Magnuson, Executive Director, Louisville Grows**

Henry invited Valerie Magnuson, Executive Director of Louisville Grows, to present on Love Louisville Trees (LLT). Valerie explained that LLT is a project of Louisville Grows that focuses on neighborhood-based urban reforestation. She said they started in Portland and went door-to-door asking people if they wanted a free tree. She said they had a great response, planting a total of 168 trees and only limited by funding. Valerie said the funding came from MSD and Habitat for Humanity, the latter of whom also allowed their warehouse to be used as the staging area. Each resident also received a tree-care guide in the mail.

Valerie said LLT had also done two Citizen Forester trainings with 42 citizen foresters. The trainings were led by Chris O'Bryan of Limbwalker Tree Service and Sarah Wolfe of the Olmsted Parks Conservancy. Valerie said the fall planting was a pilot project, but the next phase will involve spring plantings, including a big fruit tree planting in Portland, as fruit trees were requested by many residents. There will be another planting in Germantown/Schnitzelberg. And there will be third planting with a location to be determined, possibly near Coleridge Taylor Elementary School.

Valerie enumerated the specific tree plantings from this fall's efforts, which included nine trees from Eco-Tech, facilitated by Mike Hayman. Henry asked what kinds of trees were planted. She said they were all 1.5"-2" caliper trees, but that there was a variety of tree species, including some small- and medium-sized trees such as dogwoods, redbuds, and yellow woods.

Katy encouraged Valerie to have LLT join the Alliance of Community Trees. Valerie said she was already aware of them and had gotten some good information from them. Maria said she and Valerie had been in conversation and would continue to work together. Katy noted the importance of this kind of organization and said that in Pittsburgh a similar organization had raised \$9 million.

Valerie said everyone who received trees agreed to maintain them, including the cemeteries, the park lands, and the school. She said at the school, LLT would be keeping the trees mulched. She said she and Alex, her intern, were the only paid staff for the tree project, but that they'd had over 200 volunteers to help.

Todd asked whether there was a difference between planting for renters or homeowners. Valerie said for renters they planted in the easements, for which they got permits. She said maintenance of the tree could be tricky if there was high tenant turnover, so in the future they need to have the renters alert them if they leave. That way LLT could know where they need to find new people to maintain the trees. Valerie said so far they had only done six streets. Katy said in past years Brightside had had a hard time getting people in the neighborhood to take trees. Mike asked if they were going to continue in Portland. Valerie said that was likely as there were still people in Portland calling them asking for trees.

Katy asked for a description of how the process works. Allen asked for a written lessons-learned document so the Commission and others could learn from what LLT had done. Henry thanked Valerie for coming and asked her to keep the Commission updated on LLT efforts.



### **c. Committee Reports**

#### **i. Projects & Maintenance Committee**

Mike said they planted three trees at the edge of the Reynolds property, but that the Parkland neighborhood could probably use 1,000 or more trees. He said they were next going to do 18 trees at Brandeis Elementary. He said they could do more if the trees aren't killed by mowers. He said there's a church at Broadway that could do another 20 trees. He said there were a lot of trees that could be planted at Park DuValle, and they could do 130 trees there.

Mike said there were huge planting opportunities with the Housing Authority, including a site on Hancock and Clay Streets at Liberty Green. Henry asked whether there would be a commitment to water there. Mike said yes. Henry asked how to know whether the Housing Authority had the facilities or the will. Mike said Mark White could water the trees for the first year.

Mike said there were several more Eco-Tech projects that they were going to do. He said with Erin starting her job, he was going to pass off a lot of what he was doing to plan and manage planting projects that use city funds. He envisioned working in concert with her. Mike said he saw himself managing more of the private donation money not the public money in the future.

Henry asked what percentage of the city's tree budget had been spent. Mike said if the Park DuValle trees came through, they would have spent \$100,000 of the \$250,000. Gina said that was great.

### **VI. Audience questions**

An audience member asked what the status was of a Metro Tree Ordinance. Katy said the Policy Committee was doing research on other cities' tree ordinances. But they were already submitting recommended revisions to Chapter 10 of the Land Development Code (LDC), which were working their way through an LDC Committee process. Sherie' said that committee's next meeting would be December 17<sup>th</sup>. She said it would be great to have more community voices at those meetings. The meetings run from 3:00pm-5:00pm. Sherie' said once that committee makes their recommendations, it goes to the Planning Commission. From there it goes to Metro Council, who will decide whether to adopt it or send it back. She said it was important to get involved at this grassroots level.

Todd seconded what Sherie' was saying. He added that the Commission was a body that was representative of the community, representing the average citizens of Louisville. Katy added that a mere physical presence in the room would be helpful.

The same audience member asked whether Tree Tracker tracked tree removals. Erin said no, but that in the long run they might try to develop that capability, either through Tree Tracker or something else.

Steve Kempf said Herb Fink had called him about the 9<sup>th</sup> Street Extension where many trees had been planted but died. Mike said it was on the list for future plantings, but that the trees had apparently been killed by damage from lawn mowers.

### **VII. Adjourn**

Henry adjourned the meeting at 6:23 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 12, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. at Whitehall.